

FLAMBEAU FINDS THE LANDSCAPE CLUB OF WASHINGTON

A TRUE ART BROTHERHOOD WITH FASCINATING HISTORY

GROUP OF MEN LIKE BARBIZON PAINTERS FAMOUS IN FRANCE

They Are All Government Employees Who Have Won Fame by Their Works and Who Are Now Giving Their Own Exhibition at Club Rooms and Studio in Fifteenth Street—They Don't Hesitate to Tramp Fifteen Miles on Holidays to See Nature at First Hand.

By VICTOR FLAMBEAU.

WHO says that working for Uncle Sam stultifies the mind, dwarfs the soul, and unfits one for any other kind of pursuit?

There is a group of men in Washington, employed by the Government, who can disprove that statement from beginning to end. They compose the Landscape Club, and most of them are in positions which give but little scope for pure imagination, yet these men by utilizing their Sundays and holiday spare time have made themselves so strong as painters that in the recent exhibition of Washington artists at the Corcoran, the art event of the season, landscapes dominated the show, notwithstanding that the study of portraiture is more popular than ever.

Now the Landscape Club is holding its own exhibition. It opened yesterday at the club rooms and studio, 1221 Fifteenth street northwest, where they themselves invite you all to visit them for the next two weeks from 5:15 to 9 p. m. on weekdays and Sundays from 2 to 5 p. m. The forty pictures are for sale at unusually reasonable prices for the beauty of the works.

The history of this club, and its gradual development, is as fascinating to Victor Flambeau as the story of the Barbizon painters of France, who went out from Paris and lived in Fontainebleau, or of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of England, which revolutionized the whole British conception of painting.

And our landscape artists are even more interesting, for they have done a unique thing—they have continued their daily vocations, the bread and butter end, so necessary, giving good service, and in addition they have developed an avocation generally believed to be only possible for the leisured few. Besides all this, the Landscape Club men are preserving for us the beauty of our Washington environs, they are helping us to see it better, and it is all about us, here and in the suburbs, the most beautiful spots in the world.

These men—for so far they limit their membership to men, though tradition has it that a member did bring a lady one Sunday—are painting exceptional pictures, they have the true spirit of art, their work is inspired by truth and sincerity, and many, many more Washington homes would be happier to have the daily delight and companionship of a picture from the Landscape Club. Instead of buying a new car, buy a new picture. Buy both, and enjoy lovely landscape scenes all the time.

LIKE ARTISTS OF OLD.

When our people as a whole feel the need for art so that they buy and appreciate such good painting as we have here from some of our own artists, then we shall see Washington very rapidly become the national art center, and eventually the world art center. The new Renaissance will begin here, for that was the spirit in old Italy, when a mere handful of Florentine painters, most of them poor men, awakened a flame of vision that has lighted us until today, when we again await a fresh gleam.

The Landscape Club of Washington evolved in this way. Nearly ten years ago one or two solitary young landscape painters used to stroll out on Sundays in search of chance scenes of beauty. A passerby would stop to admire their work.

"Do you paint?" the artist would ask. "Wouldn't you like to join us every week? We are men in Government office, and are free only on Sundays, when we make excursions to study landscape subjects."

So the club grew, a picked body of tried recruits, who didn't hesitate to tramp ten or fifteen miles, fording streams, or spending all day in the wet and cold of some picturesque marsh, seeing Nature at first hand.

Some of these men had studied at the Corcoran Art School, some elsewhere, and several had not studied at all—they just painted, and pretty well, too. One is a Frenchman by way of Louisiana, another is of Dutch descent via Grand Rapids, and one of the leaders claims Scandinavian ancestry, a fourth is a Londoner. Thus the cosmopolitan band was built up, some of them Government employees, and some

tors and a few of them professional artists, like Dr. William H. Holmes, director of the National Gallery of Art and president of the Society of Washington Artists, who shows us in the present exhibition "Vesuvius from Naples," a fascinating Italian scene in watercolor.

ROLLE HAS TWO PAINTINGS.

A. H. O. Rolle, president of the Landscape Club and a former secretary of Washington Artists, is represented by two oil paintings, "On River Road, Georgetown" and "An Old Bladensburg Lane," in his usual agreeable style. Mr. Rolle's work has a poetic quality, softness and delicacy, with fine unity, and might hang anywhere. He also makes delightful pen-and-ink drawings. His early home was in Minnesota.

Another member, Charles H. Seaton, has a charming estate in Glen-carlyn, Va., and is also one of the Washington Artists. He is identified with the Bureau of Soils as an editor. His pictures "Cedar Knoll" and "Near Eastern Branch," in oil, are interesting in subject and harmonious in color.

Mr. Seaton paints anywhere there's a subject. It depends on the day. It isn't the tree. It isn't the view that makes the picture. It is the indescribable thing that produces the landscape. The same is true with a portrait. The smaller the picture the more detail. "If the detail is right," says Mr. Seaton, "there can hardly be too much detail in a small picture."

Hedley V. Patterson, Jr., one of the younger members and a Government engraver, hails from Boston, where he formerly studied at the Massachusetts State Art School. Migrating to Washington in war work on the Liberty bonds about 1917, he joined the Landscape Club. Two of his very promising compositions in oil, "Down by the Spring" and "The Blacksmith Shop," are in the present display. Last summer he painted at Chester Springs, Pa., where he worked with the Pennsylvania Academy Summer Art School.

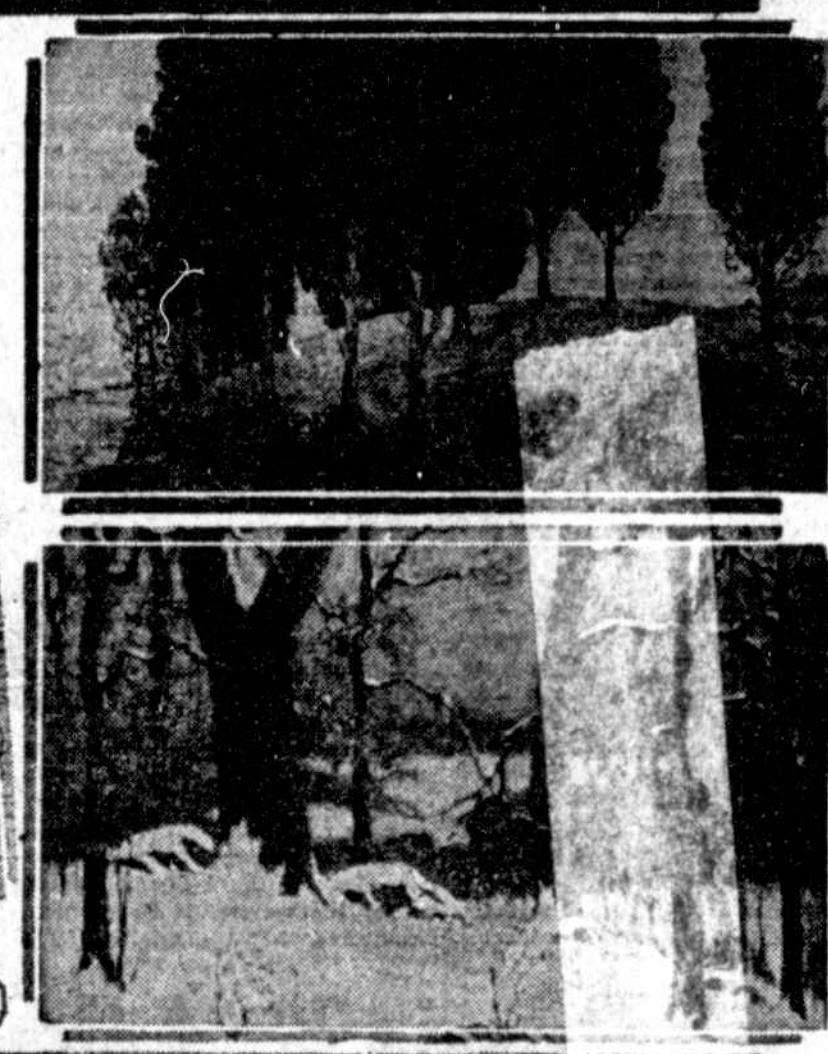
THE YOUNGEST MEMBER.

Another, perhaps the youngest member, is A. J. Schram, born in Grand Rapids, Mich. From service overseas he brought back interesting themes, and in the present exhibition his "Gray Day" and "Old Virginia Barn," both in oil, are pleasing and well-painted scenes. Mr. Schram was a pupil at the Corcoran, and is also a member of the Washington Artists.

Herbert Francis Clark, who draws trees so well, has two notable landscapes in oil, "Overlooking Oxen Run," and a nocturne, "Evening." Mr. Clark is secretary of the Washington Artists, for whose recent excellent display so much credit is due him as well as others of the Landscape Club. Mr. Clark, who is in the Geological Survey, was born in Holyoke, Mass., but studied at the Corcoran School, and is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design.

Benson Bond Moore, a Washington man, another member who is also one of the Washington Artists, is well represented in the present exhibition by a particularly good winter landscape, in oil, "Wintry Woodlands," and another, "Sunshine After Storm."

SOME gems from the brushes of Landscape Club artists. At the top is "After the Shower" by A. H. O. Rolle. Beneath it is a pen and ink sketch by the same artist. Next to it is a canvas entitled "Cedar Knoll" by Charles H. Seaton. Below, "Wintry Woodlands" by Benson B. Moore. The bottom painting is called "Vesuvius From Naples" by W. H. Holmes.



His cloud effects are often quite wonderful.

Born in London is the history of W. Bowyer Pain, who studied art at the Portland School in connection with South Kensington. Mr. Pain's water color, "Silgo Creek," one of the most attractive pictures of the exhibition, is painted with careful attention to drawing and composition, in a charming style.

Mr. Pain formerly made engravings for illustrations of some of the great authors, including Dickens, and since coming to America, he was pleasantly surprised one day to find his figure of "Great Heart," a strong character of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," as one of the thirteen pictures of the five-foot bookshelf of Harvard classics. Mr. Pain's son was severely wounded during the war when he served with the Eighth London Rifles, and was only able to return during the last year, bringing numerous decorations

and a gold medal for his bravery.

Robert F. Cornett, who likes to paint the Eastern Branch, is of French descent, coming from Louisiana. Two of his oil pictures in the present exhibit, "Beeches Along Rock Creek" and "From the Hilltop," are particularly well painted. Asked why the Landscape Club membership is limited to men, Mr. Cornett replied: "It would be quite impossible for women to climb about where we go, over the rough country, and through the wet marshes, or to endure the freezing cold of many winter days." Yes, he is French, but everybody likes him!

Capt. Winfield Scott Cline, a member of the club though at present in New York, interested in stage settings, has a "Landscape" in oil. He recently exhibited in New York at the National Academy of Design. Captain Cline was for several years official photographer for the Department of Agriculture. During

the war, he was overseas with the photographic division of the signal corps, and established photographic laboratories both in Paris and Washington, and it was under his direction that the Government collection of war films was catalogued and stored here. Captain Cline, who was a pupil at Drexel Institute in Philadelphia and later at the Corcoran, is also a member of the Washington Artists.

De Lancey Gill, who is so favorably known in connection with illustrations of Smithsonian publications in the bureau of American ethnology, and who is considered a successful in exhibiting and selling his compositions, which are always popular with the public, is represented by a landscape in oil in the exhibition. His "Prospect Hill" in the Washington artists' recent show was also noteworthy.

Other much-liked pictures are Fred E. Golde's "Chilly Weather,"

C. F. Whittenauer's "Frog Rock," George D. Mitchell's "Along Queen's Chapel Road," and Frank W. Meyers' "Willows," all interesting landscape scenes painted in oil. One of the newer members, J. B. Richardson, won the Corcoran gold medal while a student there. Another member, Edwin G. Cassidy, is now in Mexico.

In talking with the members of the Landscape Club, one is delighted to find that they do not take themselves too seriously, but have an evident sense of humor, which assures the best bonhomie. "This club," explains Mr. Seaton, the literary member, "has grown by gradual accretion, but they have stayed together by natural adhesion. It was a test of work and comradeship. It is a natural coterie."

They are earnest in their work and in more than one respect may be compared to the Barbizon painters, who went out of Paris to establish at Fontainebleau

"LOG BOOK" REPLETE WITH INTERESTING LINES AND SKETCHES

"Nulla Dies Sine Linea," Which Means "Not a Day Without a Line," Is the Motto Proposed by Charles H. Seaton, One of the Members. A. H. O. Rolle Is President of the Organization, Which Preserves Beauty of Washington Environs.

first school turning absolutely to nature."

"In one way," agrees Mr. Rolle, the president, "we do resemble them, for we go direct to nature for our studies."

The Landscape Club held four exhibitions last year besides sending out a selection of their work for a traveling exhibition.

THE LOG BOOK.

The history of this organization, as recorded in their "Log Book," is an "edition de luxe," limited to eight copies, their membership at the time, is interesting reading. It suggests much of the feeling and effort which has gone to build this youngest art society of Washington.

"The Ramblers' Sketch Club"—that was their first name, and the book begins: "Man is a gregarious animal, and notwithstanding a popular belief to the contrary, so is the artist. Like some fish, he runs in schools."

"Nulla dies sine linea," is the motto proposed by Seaton: "Not a day without a line."

Under the heading, "Thank you, Rhode Island," we read: "In 1916, the Ramblers welcomed into full fellowship Herbert F. Clark, graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design—which doesn't seem to have hurt him much—and inventor of the grand piano sketching case." The latter they illustrate later on.

"Spring in all its glory" is a later note, with some lines of verse about the mocking bird, after which the secretary records: "Rolle, Hoff, and I hiked three miles to the station, just missed our car, awaited another one, consoled ourselves over our anticipated welcome (?) on our late return home . . . and felt grateful for the appreciation even if we had failed to fulfill our ambitions in depicting the beauties of spring."

Of another Sunday in 1917, "acting on the theory that nature is at its best in the early morning, Moore and I arrived at the rendezvous (the gully north of Bunker Hill near Mt. Rainier, Md.) about 7:30. . . . The day was full of color and the distances were excellent in tone, the sky was cloudy, somewhat gray, indefinite, and exceedingly hard to paint on account of an apparent lack of surface. . . ."

TIDE FILLED MARSH.

Later in the season: "We had a fine view of the overflow of the Eastern Branch; due to the full of the moon the tide was exceedingly high. Planks, boxes, and countless other objects were floating all over the meadow."

The club members became keen observers, who took delight in recording their impressions. Many of their notes are quite as interesting as much of the material preserved of other well-known groups of artists of earlier days.

Here is another bit of observation: "By this time a strong breeze was blowing, cloud after cloud was racing across the sky; some light gray, some yellow, others pale green. They were of all shapes and sizes and were continually changing place, the smaller seeking to hide themselves as for protection. . . . The world's great panorama was full of rich coloring. This we would be bold enough to try to reproduce on our canvas."

Later we read: "We all made creditable sketches. Moore had a fine sky effect in keeping with his work. Seaton's and Schram's were very good and Rolle made two good ones. . . ."

And as it is Mr. Cornett's turn to keep the record, he adds a poem in French, perhaps a bit of original verse, which he translates:

"The sun on the dale was careening. The violet in the nooks were peeping. In the briar the thrushes were singing. For the Ramblers who were painting."

Then on another day they record where they have exhibited their pictures, beginning with 1916, and showing steady progress.

Again, when Cassidy keeps the record: "It rained," he writes, "I repeat it: It rained! After Moore, Schram, Seaton, Cornett, Rolle, and Cassidy got well into the work, nature felt hurt at the insults heaped upon her and wept on us. . . . However, we came out all right in the end, with none of the bunch producing anything wonderful. Thoroughly wet, but happy and filled with memories of a mighty pleasant day. . . ."

The elements of nature so often seemed to be opposing them. "When we had been at work but a short time," writes Moore of another occasion, "the breeze assumed the proportions of a gale, in which it was almost impossible to work; nevertheless, we fought it out to the bitter end." Cornett's palette blew away, and fell, paint side down. And the trip was not quite a success this time.

PALETTE BLEW AWAY.

Mr. Rolle records: "The morning of June 10, 1917, was gray and drizzly, but a little thing like rain does not make very much difference to one afflicted with the art bug, and Hoff, Seaton, Clark, Schram, Cassidy, and the writer met at the appointed time in Georgetown, with paint kits and the usual paraphernalia. It was decided to re-explore the countryside in the neighborhood of Foxall road—a field which had been a favorite haunt of the Ramblers in time gone by."

Schram writes: "Saturday, June 17, 1917, the first Government half-holiday, the Ramblers met at the Aqueduct Bridge at 2 p. m. . . . The day was balmy and the cloud effects unusually good. Somebody mentioned Ridge Road, and as usual, all fell in line. . . ."

The writer, after considerable dallying around, chose the same subject with but one animal in the foreground, which took the form of nearly all of the North American wild beasts before developing into a cow, thanks to the aid and advice of Clark and Rolle, the latter of whom stepped upon his perfectly good cigar, which he had laid down, in his efforts to domesticate the critter."

ONE HELD THE SHEEP.

All of which reminds one of the Pre-Raphaelites, when one of their number attempted to paint sheep, which another member, solemnly held in position for the painter while they were being depicted, and spent most of one day doing so, and found them very trying brutes.

Cornett again, of a later June day, reports: "It was an ideal spot for an interior sketch—shady, quiet, and a little silvery spring of fresh water nearby. A locust on an upper branch was entertaining us with an 'African serenade.' Seaton's turn next time: 'Some misogynist has said: 'You never can tell what a woman will do next.' If you guess the painter enthusiast much better you are wiser than I. He will spend the whole of a beautiful day walking, looking, studying, and never lay his palette. Again, on a day no better, he will sketch until he is completely painted out. He will stay in for a mere threat in the sky, and the very next day grab his kit, galoshes, umbrella, and raincoat, and brave an easterly, praying that the rain will let up for just one hour.'"

Clark again, who records: "St. Swithens day promised nothing definite. The sky was overcast, but no rain was falling, as the Ramblers assembled at Chevy Chase Lake between 9 and 9:30. Cornett, Hoff, Rolle and I wandered over the rain-soaked fields and finally picked out a motif with the storm-bearing clouds as its most interesting feature. We could have done this in our own back yard. . . . Cornett's sketch was fully emulsified with the spirits of St. Swithin."

Thus endeth the first reading. The reports of the Landscape Club are continued through another volume, coming down to nearly the present time. Charming little drawings in pen and ink add humor to the story. Clark with his grand piano sketching case, labeled 100 pounds, "adds weight," is one comment.

One might go on quoting very readable bits from the journal of these landscape painters, reading letters from Schram in France. But instead, go see their pictures, 1221 Fifteenth street northwest, week days from 5:15 to 9 p. m., and Sundays 2 to 5 p. m. until after May 7. Perhaps you may meet some of them there. They will welcome you and their friends just the same, even if you come just to see the pictures.